



News From Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis 32nd Congressional District of California

1725 Longworth HOB | Washington, DC 20515 – 202.225.5464 -- 202.225.5467 f.

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Contact: Edith Robles
(202) 225-2167

SOLIS OFFERS AMENDMENT TO PROTECT LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

Committee Marks Up Energy Legislation

WASHINGTON, D.C.-Today, Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis (CA-32), Ranking Member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials, offered an amendment during the House Energy and Commerce Committee mark-up of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Solis' amendment would strike all of Title III, Subtitle D, the Refinery Revitalization Act.

The Refinery Revitalization Act allows the Secretary of Energy to control the procedures for obtaining State and Federal environmental permits for refineries and the timelines for reviewing and granting permit applications. The Secretary of Energy could also override a decision of the Environmental Protection Agency or State officials denying a permit. This preempts the authority of State officials who are charged with protecting public health.

"The language is crafted on false premises and will have a very real impact on underserved communities. Most of the neighborhoods in refinery communities are low-income minority communities that lack the political power to protect themselves and their families. These communities have the least ability to defend themselves from corporate pollution and are the most vulnerable to environmental and public health problems yet are targets of this language," said Congresswoman Solis.

More than 70 percent of Latinos live in counties with dirty air. Latino children have asthma at more than two and one half times that of non-Latino white children, and death rates from asthma among African Americans are 2.5 times higher than for Whites.

Republicans argue that environmental permitting delays are keeping a large number of old refineries, which have closed over the past twenty years, from reopening to assist in producing gasoline for the American public. The EPA has reported that it is not aware of any pending permits under any environmental law for the restart of oil refineries that have closed in the past 20 years.

The Refinery Revitalization Act is opposed by the Environmental Council of the States, National Conference of State Legislatures, League of United Latin American Citizens, the National Hispanic Environmental Council, the State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators, the Association of Local Pollution Control Officials, and the South Coast Air Quality Management District in California and many other organizations.

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